

Hebrews 12:28-13:16

by St. John Chrysostom

We must serve God acceptably with gratitude and reverence, and cultivate brotherly love, hospitality, and contentment.

Scripture: Matthew 5:11, Hebrews 12:28, Hebrews 13:1, Hebrews 13:3, Hebrews 13:7-8, Hebrews 13:10-11, Hebrews 13:14, Hebrews 13:16

Topics: "Gratitude And Worship", "Sanctification Through Suffering"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches on the importance of gratitude and thankfulness in serving God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. He emphasizes the need to continue in brotherly love, hospitality, and remembering those who suffer adversity. Chrysostom encourages contentment, faith, and offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, regardless of circumstances. He highlights the significance of enduring afflictions with thanksgiving, as they draw us closer to God and lead to sanctification.

Transcript

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace [or gratitude,] whereby we serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

1. In another place he says the same, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal 2 Corinthians 4:18; and from this makes an exhortation with regard to the evils which we endure in this present life; and here he does this, and says, let us continue steadfast; let us have thankfulness, i.e., let us give thanks unto God. For not only we ought not to be discouraged at present things, but even to show the greatest gratitude to Him, for those to come.

Whereby we serve God acceptably, that is to say, 'for thus is it possible to serve God acceptably,' by giving him thanks in all things. Do all things (he says) without murmurings and disputings. Philippians 2:14 For whatever work a man does with murmuring, he cuts away and loses his reward; as the Israelites-- how great a penalty they paid for their murmurings. Wherefore he says, Neither murmur ye. 1 Corinthians 10:10 It is not therefore possible to serve Him acceptably without a sense of gratitude to Him for all things, both for our trials, and the alleviations of them. That is, let us utter nothing hasty, nothing disrespectful, but let us humble ourselves that we may be reverential. For this is with reverence and godly fear.

Hebrews 13:1-2

Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful of hospitality, for hereby some have entertained angels unawares. See how he enjoins them to preserve what they had: he does not add other things. He did not say, Be loving as brethren, but, Let brotherly love continue. And again, he did not say, Be hospitable, as if they were not, but, Be not forgetful of hospitality, for this was likely to happen owing to their afflictions.

Therefore (he says) some have entertained angels unawares. Do you see how great was the honor, how great the gain!

What is unawares? They entertained them without knowing it. Therefore the reward also was great, because he entertained them, not knowing that they were Angels. For if he had known it, it would have been nothing wonderful. Some say that he here alludes to Lot also.

Hebrews 13:3-6

2. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, them which suffer adversity as being yourselves also in the body. Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Let your conversation be without covetousness: being content with such things as you have.

See how large is his discourse concerning chastity. Follow peace, he said, and holiness; Lest there be any fornicator or profane person Hebrews 12:14; and again, Fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Hebrews 12:16 In every case, the prohibition is with a penalty. Follow peace with all men, he says, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: But fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

And having first set down Marriage is honorable in all men, and the bed undefiled, he shows that he rightly added what follows. For if marriage has been conceded, justly is the fornicator punished, justly does the adulterer suffer vengeance.

Here he strips for the heretics. He did not say again, Let no one be a fornicator; but having said it once for all, he then went on as with a general exhortation, and not as directing himself against them.

Let your conversation be without covetousness, he says. He did not say, Possess nothing, but, Let your conversation be without covetousness: that is, let it show forth the philosophical character of your mind. [And it will show it, if we do not seek superfluities, if we keep only to what is necessary.] For he says above also, And ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods. Hebrews 10:34 He gives these exhortations, that they might not be covetous.

Being content (he says) with such things as you have. Then here also the consolation; Hebrews 13:5 For He (he says) has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you; Hebrews 13:6 so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Again consolation in their trials.

Hebrews 13:7

3. Remember them which have the rule over you. This he was laboring to say above: therefore Follow peace with all men. Hebrews 12:14 He gave this exhortation also to the Thessalonians, to hold them in honor exceedingly. 1 Thessalonians 5:13

Remember (he says) them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. What kind of following is this? Truly the best:

for he says, beholding their life, follow their faith. For from a pure life [comes] faith.

Or else by faith, he means steadfastness. How so? Because they believe in the things to come. For they would not have shown forth a pure life, if they had questioned about the things to come, if they had doubted. So that here also he is applying a remedy to the same [evil].

Hebrews 13:8-9

Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever. Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

In these words, Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and for ever, yesterday means all the time that is past: today, the present: for ever, the endless which is to come. That is to say: You have heard of an High Priest, but not an High Priest who fails. He is always the same. As though there were some who said, 'He is not, another will come,' he says this, that He who was yesterday and today, is the same also forever. For even now the Jews say, that another will come; and having deprived themselves of Him that is will fall into the hands of Antichrist.

Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines. Not with strange doctrines only, but neither with various ones.

For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. Here he gently hints at those who introduce the observance of meats. For by Faith all things are pure. There is need then of Faith, not of meats.

Hebrews 13:10

For Hebrews 13:10 we have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the Tabernacle. Not as the Jewish [ordinances], are those among us, as it is not lawful even for the High Priest to partake of them. So that since he had said, Do not observe, and this seemed to be [the language] of one who is throwing down his own building, he again turns it round. What, have not we then observances as well (he says)? [Yea we have], and we observe them very earnestly too, not sharing them even with the priests themselves.

Hebrews 13:11-13

4. For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High Priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered (he says) without the gate. Do you see the type shining forth? For sin, he says, and suffered without the gate. Hebrews 13:13 Let us go forth therefore to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach, that is, suffering the same things; having communion with Him in His sufferings. He was crucified without as a condemned person: neither let us then be ashamed to go forth out [of the world].

Hebrews 13:14-15

For we have here no continuing city (he says) but we seek one to come. By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name.

By Him, as by an High Priest, according to the flesh. Giving thanks (he says) to His Name. (See p. 514.) Let us utter nothing blasphemous, nothing hasty, nothing bold, nothing presumptuous, nothing desperate. This is with reverence and godly fear. Hebrews 12:28 For a soul in tribulations becomes desponding, and reckless. But let not us [be so]. See here he again says the same thing which he said before, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, for so shall we be able to do all things with reverence. For oftentimes even out of respect for men, we refrain from doing many evil things.

Hebrews 13:16

But to do good and to communicate forget not. I speak not [merely] with reference to the brethren present, but to those absent also. But if others have plundered your property, display your hospitality out of such things as you have. What excuse then shall we have henceforward, when they, even after the spoiling of their goods, were thus admonished?

5. And he did not say, Be not forgetful of the entertaining of strangers, but of hospitality: that is, do not merely entertain strangers, but [do it] with love for the strangers. Moreover he did not speak of the recompense that is future, and in store for us, lest he should make them more supine, but of that already given. For thereby some (he says) have entertained angels unawares.

But let us see in what sense Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled. Because (he means) it preserves the believer in chastity. Here he also alludes to the Jews, because they accounted the woman after childbirth polluted: and whosoever comes from the bed, it is said, is not clean. Those things are not polluted which arise from nature, O ungrateful and senseless Jew, but those which arise from choice. For if marriage is honorable and pure, why forsooth do you think that one is even polluted by it?

Let your conversation (he says) be without covetousness: since many after having exhausted their property, afterwards wish to recover it again under the guise of alms, therefore he says, Let your conversation be without covetousness; that is, that we should be [desirous only] of what is necessary and indispensable. What then (you say) if we should not have a supply even of these? This is not possible; indeed it is not. For He has said, and He does not lie, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. So that we boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. You have the promise from Himself: do not doubt henceforward. He has promised; make no question. But this, I will never leave you, he says not concerning money only, but concerning all other things also. The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me; with good reason.

This then also let us say in all temptations; let us laugh at human things, so long as we have God favorable to us. For as, when He is our enemy, it is no gain, though all men should be our friends, so when He is our friend, though all men together war against us, there is no harm. I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

6. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God. In this place I think that he is speaking about assistance also. For this is [implied in the words] who have spoken unto you the word of God.

Whose faith follow considering the end of their conversation. What is, considering? Continually revolving, examining it by yourselves, reasoning, investigating accurately, testing it as you choose. The end of their conversation, that is, their conversation to the end: for their conversation had a good end.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not think that then indeed He wrought wonders, but now works no wonders. He is the same. This is, remember them that have the rule over you.

Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines. Strange, that is, different from those ye heard from us; [Divers] that is, of all sorts: for they have no stability, but are different [one from another]. For especially manifold is the doctrine of meats.

For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats. These are the various, these the strange [doctrines]: especially as Christ has said, not that which enters into the mouth defiles the man, but that which comes out. Matthew 15:11 And observe that he does not make bold to say this openly, but as it were by a hint. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats.

Faith is all. If that establishes [it], the heart stands in security. It follows that Faith establishes: consequently reasonings shake. For Faith is contrary to reasoning.

Which (he says) have not profited them that have been occupied therein. For what is the gain from the observance [of them], tell me. Does it not rather destroy? Does it not make such an one to be under sin? If it be necessary to observe [them], we must guard ourselves.

Which (he says) have not profited them that have been occupied therein. That is, who have always diligently kept them.

There is one observance, abstaining from sin. For what profit is it, when some are so polluted, as not to be able to partake of the sacrifices? So that it did not save them at all; although they were zealous about the observances. But because they had not faith, even thus they profited nothing.

7. In the next place he takes away the sacrifice from the type, and directs his discourse to the prototype, saying, The bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High Priest, are burned without the camp. Then those things were a type of these and thus Christ, suffering without, fulfilled all.

Here he makes it plain too that He suffered voluntarily, showing that those things were not accidental, but even the [Divine] arrangement itself was of a suffering without. [He suffered] without, but His Blood was borne up into Heaven. You see then that we partake of Blood which has been carried into the Holy Place, the True Holy Place; of the Sacrifice of which the Priest alone had the privilege. We therefore partake of the Truth [the Reality]. If then we partake not of reproach [only] but of sanctification, the reproach is the cause of the sanctification. For as He was reproached, so also are we. If we go forth without therefore, we have fellowship with Him.

But what is, Let us go forth to Him? Let us have fellowship with Him in His sufferings; let us bear His reproach. For He did not simply bid us dwell outside the gate, but as He was reproached as a condemned person, so also we.

And by Him let us offer a sacrifice to God. Of what kind of sacrifice does he speak? The fruit of lips giving thanks to His Name. They [the Jews] brought sheep, and calves, and gave them to the Priest: let us bring none of these things, but thanksgiving. This fruit let our lips put forth.

For with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Let us give such a sacrifice to Him, that He may offer [it] to The Father. For in no other way it is offered except through the Son, or rather also through a contrite mind.

All these things [are said] for the weak. For that the thanks belong to the Son is evident: since otherwise, how is the honor equal? That all men (He says) should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. John 5:23 Wherein is the honor equal? The fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name.

8. Let us bear all things thankfully, be it poverty, be it disease, be it anything else whatever: for He alone knows the things expedient for us. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought. Romans 8:26 We then who do not know even how to ask for what is fitting, unless we have received of the Spirit, let us take care to offer up thanksgiving for all things, and let us bear all things nobly. Are we in poverty? Let us give thanks. Are we in sickness? Let us give thanks. Are we falsely accused? Let us give thanks: when we suffer affliction, let us give thanks.

This brings us near to God: then we even have God for our debtor. But when we are in prosperity, it is we who are debtors and liable to be called to account. For when we are in prosperity, we are debtors to God: and oftentimes these things bring a judgment upon us, while those are for a payment of sins. Those [afflictions] draw down mercy, they draw down kindness: while these on the other hand lift up even to an insane pride, and lead also to slothfulness, and dispose a man to fancy great things concerning himself; they puff up. Therefore the prophet also said, It is good for me, Lord, that You have afflicted me; that I may learn Your statutes. Psalm 119:71 When Hezekiah had received blessings and been freed from calamities, his heart was lifted up on high; when he fell sick, then was he humbled, then he became near to God. When He slew them, it says, then they sought Him diligently, and turned, and were early in coming to God. Psalm 78:34 And again, When the beloved waxed gross and fat, then he kicked. Deuteronomy 32:15 For the Lord is known when He executes judgments. Psalm 9:16

9. Affliction is a great good. Narrow is the way Matthew 7:14, so that affliction thrusts us into the narrow [way]. He who is not pressed by affliction cannot enter. For he who afflicts himself in the narrow [way], is he who also enjoys ease; but he that spreads himself out, does not enter in, and suffers from being so to say wedged in. See how Paul enters into this narrow way. He keeps under his body 1 Corinthians 9:27, so as to be able to enter. Therefore, in all his afflictions, he continued giving thanks unto God. Have you lost your property? This has lightened you of the most of your wideness. Have you fallen from glory? This is another sort of wideness. Have you been falsely accused? Have the things said against you, of which you are nowise conscious to yourself been believed? Rejoice and leap for joy. For blessed are you (He says) when men reproach you, and say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven. Matthew 5:11-12

Why do you marvel, if you are grieved, and wish to be set free from temptations? Paul wished to be set free, and oftentimes entreated God, and did not obtain. For the thrice for this I besought the Lord, is oftentimes; and He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 By weakness, he here means afflictions. What then? When he heard this he received it thankfully, and says, Wherefore I take pleasure in infirmities 2 Corinthians 12:10; that is, I am pleased, I rest in my afflictions. For all things then let us give thanks, both for comfort, and for affliction. Let us not murmur: let us not be unthankful. Naked came I out of my mother's womb, naked also shall I depart. Job 1:21 You did not come forth glorious, do not seek glory. You were brought into life naked, not of money alone, but also of glory, and of honorable name.

Consider how great evils have oftentimes arisen from wealth. For It is easier (it is said) for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 19:24 Do you see to how many good things wealth is a hindrance, and do you seek to be rich? Do you not rejoice

that the hindrance has been overthrown? So narrow is the way which leads into the Kingdom. So broad is wealth, and full of bulk and swelling out. Therefore He says, Sell that you have Matthew 19:21, that that way may receive you. Why do you yearn after wealth? For this cause He took it away from you, that He might free you from slavery. For true fathers also, when a son is corrupted by some mistress, and having given him much exhortation they do not persuade him to part from her, send the mistress into banishment. Such also is abundance of wealth. Because the Lord cares for us, and delivers us from the harm [which arises] therefrom, He takes away wealth from us.

Let us not then think poverty an evil: sin is the only evil. For neither is wealth a good thing by itself: to be well-pleasing to God is the only good. Poverty then let us seek, this let us pursue: so shall we lay hold on heaven, so shall we attain to the other good things. Which may we all attain by the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father together with the Holy Ghost be glory, power, honor, now and ever and world without end. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/hebrews-1228-1316/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net